

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 05664 251440Z

44

ACTION NEA-10

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9280

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE DAMASCUS 5664

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR CVIS SY LE

SUBJ: LEBANESE ACCESS TO SYRIA

1. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS SYRO-LEBANESE BORDER PROCEDURES AT MASNAA HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT SIMPLIFIED. FIRST, CHECKPOINT WHERE FINAL APPROVAL GRANTED FOR LEBANESE WHO HAVE SECURED TRAVEL PERMITS FROM EITHER JUNIYAH, BCHARRE OR ZAHLE HAS BEEN MOVED BACK TO CHTAURA. THIS FACILITATED SYRO-LEBANESE COORDINATION ON SECURITY MATTERS IN BEKAA AND INCIDENTALLY ESTABLISHES FURTHER ELEMENT OF SYRIAN ADMINISTRATION IN HEART OF BEKAA (WE DOUBT SYRIANS HAD ANYTHING IN MIND IN CHTAURA ARRANGEMENT BEYOND FACILITATING VISA PROCEDURES). SECOND, LEBANESE MUSLIMS ARE BEING PERMITTED TO OBTAIN ENTRY PERMITS FROM ZAHLE, ALTHOUGH CASES WHICH HAVE COME TO ATTENTION OF CONSULAR SECTION HAVE BEEN LIMITED TO SHIITES, WHO GENERALLY SUPPORT SARG.

2. CONSULAR SECTION LEARNED FROM VISA APPLICANTS THAT SECURITY IN ZAHLE AREA PRETTY WELL ESTABLISHED AND GUARANTEED BY SYRIAN ARMY WHICH WITHIN CITY AND FORBIDS ARMED GROUPS OR MILITIA ON STREETS. (ARMS HAVE NOT, HOWEVER, BEEN COLLECTED FROM ZAHLE POPULATION.)

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LEBANESE POLICE FORCE HAS BEEN RE-ESTABLISHED IN ZAHLE

IN PRE-CIVIL WAR UNIFORMS. REPAIR OF ZAHLE TELEPHONE
EQUIPMENT NOW UNDERWAY.

3. SOME CIVILIAN DOCUMENTS NORMALLY REQUIRED AS PART
OF VISA PACKAGE AVAILABLE FROM LEBANESE GOVERNMENT
OFFICES IN CHRISTIAN-CONTROLLED AREAS. POLICE
CLEARANCES CAN BE OBTAINED FROM ZAHLE AND FROM
CHRISTIAN POLICE IN ASHRAFIYAH. WE DO NOT KNOW EXTENT
OF RECORDS ON WHICH THESE CERTIFICATES BASED, HOWEVER.

4. WE UNDERSTAND THAT UYUN AL-SIMAN ROAD REOPENED
AUGUST 21, POSSIBLY EARLIER. TRAVEL BETWEEN JUNIYAH
AND DAMASCUS NOW POSSIBLE VIA AIR-CONDITIONED
PULLMAN BUS. ACCORDING TO ONE TRAVELER WHO TOOK THE
BUS, COST WAS 55 L.L. AND TRIP LASTS 12 HOURS.
CHRISTIANS PATROLLED AS FAR EAST AS FARAYA, FROM WHICH
POINT SYRIAN MILITARY PATROLS BEGAN.
MUPRHY

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